

What is a Piping Plover?

The piping plover is a small, sand-colored bird, similar to a sandpiper. Adult plovers have yellow-orange legs, a black band across the forehead and a black ring around the base of the neck. They run with short starts and stops, often near the water's edge. When still, their color allows them to blend into the surrounding outer beach environment. This camouflage not only hides them from predators, but also makes them less visible to walkers or people in vehicles. They are named for their sad sounding, bell-like whistles, which are often heard before the birds are seen.

Threats

Several factors have contributed to the decline of the Piping Plover along the Atlantic coast:

Loss of Habitat - Development of our beach areas for commercial, residential, and recreational use has resulted in decreasing coastal habitats for plovers.

Disturbance - Plovers, eggs and their young are so well camouflaged to protect themselves against predators (such as gulls, crows and foxes) that they are in danger of being disturbed or stepped on by humans. From a vehicle, plovers are even less likely to be seen.

Pets - Unleashed and unattended pets may harass birds. Even well-behaved pets walking close to fenced areas will disturb plovers, and may even cause nest abandonment. Remember, if you bring a pet to a park, they must be on a leash no more than 6' in length and under an owner's control at all times. Keep them away from nesting areas

Trash - Attracts predators (gulls, crows, and

foxes) who, in turn will prey on the birds. Lend A Hand! Pick-up trash.

Thank you.

Behavior

Piping Plovers return to Long Island in March. After establishing territories and courting, a pair will form a nest (usually a depression in the sand), sometimes, lined with shells or pebbles. Typically four eggs are laid and usually hatch around 25 days later. Following their parents, chicks will feed along the shoreline. Chicks fly in 30 days. If a nest fails, plovers may renest. The sooner the birds nest successfully, the sooner fences can be removed and the beaches re-opened. Adult birds which appear injured are likely using their "broken-wing" display (see picture below) to lure you from their nest. If you see this, immediately walk towards the water.



Watch Your Step!

Suffolk County Parks IS Helping!

Due to declining population, the Piping Plover is listed as threatened and protected under the Endangered Species Act.

Suffolk County Parks through its Endangered Species Protection Program is working to protect nesting areas and birds.

Park Plover monitors locate nests and install fences and signs near nesting areas. In addition, we offer literature to educate our beachgoers.

What can you do?

As hard as we try, Suffolk County Parks cannot protect the Piping Plover alone. Your assistance is essential if we are to be successful. By observing a few rules, you can not only protect these birds, but ensure future recreational opportunities as well.

- ✓ Watch for and avoid "Restricted Areas." These areas are delineated with string or snow fence. When near these areas, walk along the water's edge, DO NOT LOITER.
- ✓ Do not approach or linger near birds or nests.
- ✓ Keep pets leashed, under control and away from fenced areas.
- ✓ If you carry it in, carry it out. Keep beaches clean of all trash.
- ✓ If vehicles are allowed, **DRIVE VERY SLOWLY**. Steer clear of fenced areas and watch carefully for presence of birds or nests.
- ✓ Do not drive vehicles in areas posted "No Vehicles Allowed". There may be un-fledged chicks (chicks that cannot fly) in the area.

What if I see a Plover?

If you see a Piping Plover simply back away from the area. Try not to disturb the birds or nests in any way. If they continue "peeping", you are too close.

Notify park personnel if you spot birds in an area not identified as a restricted area. If you see birds, or nesting areas being harassed, or disturbed by others, notify park personnel immediately, or call Park Police at (631) 854-1422 or 911.

Beach Information

For up-to-date information on beach conditions (closures, vehicle restrictions and piping plover information), visit our website at www.suffolkcountyny.gov/parks.

The Parks Department reserves the right to prohibit vehicle use on portions of County beaches or to close beaches completely due to changes in beach conditions from natural occurrences (storms, tides, etc.) or maintenance (jetty repairs, dredging etc.) or for best management of its lands and natural resources.

For More Information Contact:

Suffolk County Parks
P.O. Box 144
West Sayville, NY 11796-0144
(631) 854-4949

Suffolk County Piping Plover Sites

- * Theodore Roosevelt County Park - Montauk
- * Ram Island County Park - Shelter Island
- * Cedar Point County Park - East Hampton
- * Northwest Harbor County Park -
East Hampton
- * Clam Island County Park - Noyac
- * Shinnecock East County Park -
Southampton
- * Meschutt Beach County Park -
Hampton Bays
- * Charles F. Altenkirch County Park -
Hampton Bays
- * Peconic Dunes County Park - Peconic
- * Goldsmith Inlet County Park - Peconic
- * Cedar Beach County Park - Southold
- * Cupsogue Beach County Park -
Westhampton
- * Smith Point County Park - Shirley
- * McAllister County Park - Belle Terre
- * Old Field County Park - Old Field
- * Roe Avenue County Park - East Patchogue
- * Hubbard County Park, Flanders

HELP THE PIPING PLOVERS!



The Suffolk County Department of Parks Recreation and Conservation manages over 48,000 acres of parkland. Each park facility provides a variety of recreational opportunities and its own unique setting for all to enjoy.

In addition to developing and maintaining the parks for public use, the Department is also responsible for recommending, instituting and implementing programs to preserve the greenery, wildlife, natural resources and habitats of fish, birds and other animals. While every effort is made to provide complete access for park visitors, the Parks Department must sometimes close portions of beaches due to beach conditions or for the best management of the lands and natural resources. When this occurs, proper notification will be posted at the parks and daily updates will be provided on the Park Department's page of the County's web site at www.suffolkcountyny.gov/parks.



DISCOVER YOUR SUFFOLK COUNTY PARKS

Emergencies Call 911



STEVEN BELLONE
SUFFOLK COUNTY EXECUTIVE